



Building a Stronger Economy

As many of you know, Great Falls recently hosted the second Economic Development Summit. Over 1,000 attendees gathered in the "Electric City" to discuss a range of topics to build Montana's economy. One of the sessions focused on tourism. In the session, conference attendees urged the tourism industry to continue to build on its existing product. The group established four specific goals for the industry: develop a master plan that examines the industry's strengths and weaknesses, keep "bed tax" funding earmarked for the promotion and marketing of tourism, educate Montanans on the importance of the tourism industry, and partner with various entities to promote Montana's culture and heritage, especially within the Native American community.

"The input from the group was well taken," said Travel Montana Director Matthew Cohn. "The discussion of maintaining "bed tax" dollars for tourism marketing has always created spirited discussion at the legislature and I am sure that will be no different when the legislature convenes in Helena in 2003. However, with that said, I believe people around the state have recognized that the bed tax is a strong, stable funding source to market the state." Cohn also added that the state is currently in the

process of awarding a contract to a business to create and develop a five-year tourism and recreation strategic plan.

Not out of the Woods Yet

While many of us would rather not think about wild fires this summer, the staff at Travel Montana believes it's better to be safe than sorry.

That is why we have been gearing up to provide the most up-to-date fire information for our visitors on our website. At this point the web staff has posted a current conditions section on the fire/rebirth page. We will continue to add information on an as needed basis. However, let's keep our fingers crossed that we have a fire free summer season; the web staff would rather be working on more creative features.

Looking for a New Market?

Montana's Finest Resorts/Grouse Mountain Lodge in Whitefish has been selected to host the 2002 Rocky Mountain International (RMI) Round Up, April 24-28, 2002. Familiarization tours for tour operators and suppliers will take place April 25, while marketplace is slated for April 26 and 27. Marketplace is limited to 60 registrants each day. Up to 40 tour operators from Germany, the United Kingdom, France,

Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and the U.S. will attend the event. Tourism suppliers from the four RMI states of Montana, Idaho, South Dakota and Wyoming will have the opportunity to meet on an appointment basis with each operator for ten minutes to promote their tourism product. The Round Up is now held only once a year and will rotate among the four states. Montana will not host another Round Up until 2006. If any CVB or region is interested in learning more about this international marketing opportunity, contact Travel Montana's Group and Overseas Marketing Manager, Pam Gosink, at (406) 444-4384 or pam@visitmt.com. Pam will be happy to discuss the benefits of the Round Up at one of your board meetings. For more Round Up information log onto www.rmi-realamerica.com/reg/form.pdf.

Be a Kid in Montana

The Lockhart family of Ballston Spa, New York, are the winners of this year's montanakids.com vacation giveaway. The promotion attracted entrants from all fifty states and Washington D.C. Executives at a recent Disney national sales meeting singled out and presented the kids' site as an example of an outstanding tourism promotion.

"Kids are very influential when it comes to planning a family vacation," explains Consumer Marketing Manager Sarah Lawlor. "With this in mind we are constantly improving and adding features to the site so kids are aware of the state as a travel destination." Lawlor adds that the promotion has also been a valuable tool to educate children about Montana and teach them how to navigate through montanakids.com.



Did You Know?

- Red Lodge and the Beartooth Highway were featured in the May/June 2001 issue of *American Cowboy Magazine*.
- Gold West Country was featured in the July/August issue of *Travel America*.
- The National Trust for Historic Preservation named Red Lodge as one of the 12 distinctive destinations in American places that have retained their character.
- Bozeman was selected as one of 10 U.S. "All-American Cities" by the Denver-based National Civic League.
- The American Bird Conservancy has named Benton Lake National Wildlife Refuge outside of Great Falls one of 100 "Globally Important Bird Areas."
- Bridger Bowl is constructing a new triple chairlift to serve the Pierre's Knob area. This chair will replace an existing double chair.
- The "Update" is available electronically. To receive this monthly publication online you may sign up on our Intranet site www.travelmontana.state.mt.us

Since the promotion began in 1999, the site has seen a 70% increase in traffic. Montanakids.com hosted 240,000 visitors from January to May 31, 2001. This is a 12% increase from the same time period last year. Kids are also spending more time cruising the site. In the month of May 2001, kids spent 13 minutes online compared to 10.5 minutes in May 2000.

Thanks to all of our partners and sponsors for assisting with this promotion. A full list of sponsors and the Lockhart's travel itinerary are posted on montanakids.com.

Spread the Word

If you are looking for ways to reach the traveling public with information about your attraction, event, property or service, consider displaying your brochure, free of charge, at one of Travel Montana's eight visitor information centers (VICs).

Last season, May through September, the community-based VICs provided travel and recreation-related material to approximately 137,000 visitors. The state-supported VICs are located in the gateway communities of St. Regis, Shelby, Dillon, West Yellowstone, Culbertson, Wibaux, Broadus and Hardin. Hardin and West Yellowstone are open year-round, while the others greet visitors from May through September.

State travel-related publications, produced in whole or in part with tax dollars, receive first priority for display in the available rack space. If space remains, each VIC decides whether to display additional material; however, any item for consideration must be travel related. For more information on Travel Montana's VIC program, contact Carol Crockett, MTRI Coordinator, (406) 444-9294.



A Super Training

Travel Montana has renewed its contract with Flathead Valley Community College to manage the SUPERHOST! program. The new contract period is for July 2001 through June 2003. In addition to Travel Montana's funds, the 2002 SUPERHOST! program will receive funding support from five tourism regions: Glacier, Gold West, Russell, Custer and Missouri River Countries. Thanks to these regional boards for their belief in and support of the program.

In the new contract, SUPERHOST! is required to offer 150 training sessions statewide. If you want to make sure that your organization and community receives tourism education and customer service training, make your reservation now. Contact Montana SUPERHOST! Statewide Coordinator Jeri Mae Rowley, (406) 756-3674, fax (406) 756-3351, e-mail: superhost@fvcc.cc.mt.us.

New Faces Around the State

Travel Montana welcomes the following people to their new posts: Amy Haggerty, Manager of the Missoula CVB; Kelly Shaffer with the Great Falls Chamber; Kim Lacey, Executive Secretary for Missouri River Country; and Marnie Hayes, Executive Director of our newest CVB in Big Sky. We would also like to introduce two new staff at our office, Carmen Whiting and Brenda Markle, who will share duties at our reception desk. Good luck to all and welcome to Montana's tourism team.

"Cool" Guides Available

Although the thermometer reads a pleasant 85 degrees F and your tan is looking good, Travel Montana's publication's department has a little something to get you thinking about winter. The new 2001/2002 edition of the Montana Winter Guide and the October 2001-April 2002 Calendar of Events are now available. If you are interested in our publications contact Travel Montana at (406) 444-2654.



Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided to disabled persons on request.

Calendar of Events

August

- 7-13 "Home on the Range" Media Tour, Russell and Missouri River Countries
- 18-23 "Clark on the Yellowstone" Media Tour, Yellowstone Country
- 23-27 Popular Photography Mentor Workshop
- 25-29 Esto 2001, Vail, Colorado

September

- 5-6 Affordable Meetings National, Washington, D.C.
- 6-13 "Amtrak Through Glacier National Park" Media Tour, Glacier Country
- 8-13 "Satin and Blue Jeans" Media Tour, Yellowstone Country
- 13-16 "Autumn Adventure In & Around Yellowstone Park" Media Tour, West Yellowstone

For all of the latest Montana tourism industry information log on to Travel Montana's Intranet site: travelmontana.state.mt.us.



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